



***United States Attorney
Southern District of New York***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 25, 2005

CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
HERBERT HADAD, MEGAN GAFFNEY,
HEATHER TASKER, BRIDGET KELLY
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600

DEA
ELIZABETH JORDAN
(212) 337-2906

**U.S. ANNOUNCES TAKEDOWN OF INTERNATIONAL HASHISH
SMUGGLING RING THAT IMPORTED MORE THAN
\$10 MILLION WORTH OF HASHISH INTO THE UNITED STATES**

*10 MEMBERS OF CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION ARRESTED IN NEW YORK;
LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SEIZED 440 POUNDS OF HASHISH WORTH
\$4.4 MILLION, \$500,000 IN DRUG MONEY, AND 100 COUNTERFEIT CREDIT
CARDS*

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent in Charge of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") in New York, joined by MICHAEL J. THOMAS, the Special Agent in Charge of the United States Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division ("IRS-CID") in New York, SALVATORE DALESSANDRO, the Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") in New York, ANDREW ARENA, the Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Division ("FBI") in New York, RAYMOND W. KELLY, the Commissioner of the New York City Police Department (the "NYPD"),

and WAYNE E. BENNETT, Superintendent of the New York State Police ("NYSP"), all of whom are members of the New York OCDETF Strike Force (the "Strike Force"), jointly announced today the complete dismantlement of an international hashish smuggling organization that allegedly imported more than \$10 million worth of hashish from Morocco and France to New York.

According to an indictment unsealed today in Manhattan federal court, VICTOR CHANI, a/k/a "Benacuer Chani," and MOHAMED CHAFAI, a/k/a "Simo," led a hashish smuggling ring (the "Criminal Organization") with members in Morocco, France, and the United States. The indictment charged that from 2002 through August 2005, CHANI, CHAFAI, along with SABRY HACHANI, a/k/a "Hicham M. Sabry," OSMANE BOUHOUJ, GHANDI KIMIA, LARBI BENNIS, ABDELLATIF SOUNNI, a/k/a "Sunny," NABIL ELMAANNI, MUSTAPHA DAHOU, HASSAN NABIRHA, HASSAN IDELASRI, and ILAN TELMONT participated in a conspiracy to import more than 1,000 pounds of hashish, worth more than \$10 million on the streets, into the United States. The Criminal Organization allegedly moved the narcotics from Morocco and France to New York City. After smuggling the hashish into the United States, the Criminal Organization allegedly sold the drugs in New York City, and then transported the resulting drug money back to the Criminal Organization's leaders in France and Morocco.

Today, Mr. KELLEY announced the arrest of 10 members of the Criminal Organization in New York. During the course of the investigation, Strike Force officers and French authorities seized more than 440 pounds of hashish, with a retail value of more than \$4.4 million, more than \$500,000 in drug proceeds, as well as more than 100 counterfeit credit cards from the Criminal Organization.

The 10 defendants arrested have been charged with federal narcotics-trafficking and credit card fraud offenses in Manhattan federal court. If convicted, the 10 charged defendants face a maximum sentence of 40 years' imprisonment and a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years' imprisonment. The defendants will be presented in Manhattan federal court, 500 Pearl Street, 5th Floor, later this afternoon.

Mr. KELLEY praised the collective efforts of the Strike Force, and the individual performance of the DEA, the IRS, ICE, the FBI, the NYPD, the NYSP, as well as French authorities, who cooperated with United States authorities throughout the investigation.

This case is being prosecuted by the International Narcotics Trafficking Unit of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. Assistant United States Attorneys AMY FINZI and GLEN G. MCGORTY are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

05-191

###